

Using the Living Lab methodology to create new competencies for students in PA programs

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Abstract: In the last two decades we have witnessed a change in the traditional functions performed by universities. Universities around the world are being called upon to fulfill more and more roles, often with fewer resources. Traditionally, teaching and research were the two main functions performed by universities. Since the 1970s, first in the USA, but also in other countries, new functions have been taken on by universities: the transfer of knowledge and technology to industry, the commercialization of knowledge and a more active role in national and regional innovation systems. Also, in most developed countries, increasing attention is being paid to the economic use of publicly funded research. There is currently EU-wide recognition of the changing role of universities. In 2022 we have the first European Strategy dedicated to universities. A significant dimension is that the Strategy recognizes the changing role of universities and the importance of them being active actors within local innovation networks. The European strategy for universities emphasizes how universities should be the central nodes of local innovation systems and use a living lab approach – piloting public solutions/policies in a real context and generating them through co-design with beneficiaries. Universities worldwide are responding to these challenges, and this translates into the emergence of new pedagogies based on concepts such as active learning and experiential learning. More and more universities are considering the concept of place-based learning. Living labs can be seen in this context as a teaching/learning methodology. With this paper we explore a specific Living lab, FSPAC living lab. The aim of this research is to investigate if using the Living lab format creates new competences for PA students. In the framework of FSPAC living lab the coordinators have tried to develop quantitative and qualitative research tools through which we try to measure the impact of FSPAC Living Lab on the level of the students and teaching staff involved. At the level of the students, the questionnaire mainly tries to identify what new skills they acquired through the participation in the Living lab. At the level of teaching staff, the interviews look at aspects such as interest in experiential learning, the difficulties encountered, the likelihood of applying these new methodologies also outside the FSPAC Living Lab (in other courses). The research is currently ongoing.